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IN THE CLAIMS:
Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method of optimizing a solution for a complex problem solvable by more than one vendor's ~~a plurality of~~ software tool packages, said method comprising:

~~selectively converting problem data into a format appropriate for at least one preselected vendor's set of software tools;~~

inputting ~~said~~ a formatted problem data into ~~said~~ each ~~at least one preselected vendor's set~~ of software tools from different tool vendors; and

~~if more than one vendor has been preselected, comparing results~~ using one or more parameters to determine a comparative ranking of ~~resultant~~ solutions ~~and selecting the optimum solution based on a criteria provided in said problem data~~ resulting from said different vendors' software tools.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving said problem data and said one or more ranking parameters from a decision maker.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein said receiving of said problem data and said ranking parameters from said decision maker comprises communicating via a computer network.

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4. (Original Claim) The method of claim 2, further comprising forwarding a result to said decision maker.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein said result comprises at least one of:

said resultant solutions from <u>one or more of</u> said ~~at least one vendor's set of~~ software tools;

<u>said comparative ranking of said solutions;</u> and

~~said~~ <u>an</u> optimum solution<u>, as based on said comparative ranking</u>.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein said forwarding of said result comprises ~~communicatiing~~ <u>communicating</u> via a computer network.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein said decision maker sends said problem data to a ~~single~~ solutions provider ~~who exercises,~~ <u>said solutions provider then exercising</u> <u>said problem data on</u> a plurality of <u>different</u> vendors' software tool packages.

8. (Currently amended) The method of claim 2, wherein said decision maker sends said problem data to a plurality of vendors, each ~~of which exercises~~ <u>said vendor then exercising</u> said problem data in said vendor's software tool package.

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9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein each said vendor subsequently

forwards said solution to a predesignated solutions provider who determines, based on ~~said~~

~~criteria~~ one or more parameters to determine a comparative ranking, an optimal solution from

said plurality of vendors' solutions.

10. (Currently amended) A system for determining an optimized solution to a problem solvable

by software tools from different tool vendors, said system comprising:

~~means for converting a problem description into a format suitable for a software tool~~

~~package for a plurality of predetermined vendors, each said software tool package comprising at~~

~~least one software tool;~~

means for exercising ~~said~~ a problem description on ~~said~~ a plurality of ~~vendors'~~ software

~~tool packages~~ tools from said different tool vendors; and

means for ranking results ~~of~~ obtained from said plurality of ~~vendors'~~ software ~~tool~~

~~packages~~ tools.

11. (Currently amended) The system of claim 10, further comprising means for entering, by an

originator, description data describing said problem to be solved, including ~~a~~ criteria for at least

one of a verification of results and a comparison ranking of said results.

12. (Original Claim) The system of claim 11, further comprising means for returning at least

one result to said originator.

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13. (Currently amended) The system of claim 12, wherein said at least one result comprises at least one of the following:

a ~~result~~ <u>solution</u> of at least one of said at least one software package;

said ranking results; and

an optimium solution based on said ranking of said results.

14. (Original Claim) The system of claim 11, wherein said originator enters said description data via a computer network.

15. (Original Claim) The system of claim 12, wherein said means for returning said at least one result comprises a computer network for communicating with said originator.

16. (Currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein said originator sends said description data to a ~~single~~ solutions provider ~~who exercises a~~ <u>, said solutions provider thereinafter exercising said problem on said</u> plurality of ~~vendors'~~ software ~~tool packages~~ <u>tools</u>.

17. (Currently amended) The system of claim 11, wherein said originator sends said description data to a plurality of vendors, each ~~of which exercises~~ <u>said vendor thereinafter exercising</u> said problem ~~description in~~ <u>on</u> said vendor's software tool package.

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18. (Currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein each said vendor subsequently forwards said solution to a predesignated solutions provider who determines, based on said criteria for ~~verification and~~ comparison, at least one of a comparative ranking and an optimal solution from said plurality of vendors' solutions.

19. (Currently amended) A system for determining an optimal solution to a problem solvable by software tools from different vendors, said system comprising:

~~a first computer terminal permitting an originator to enter problem data describing a problem to be solved, said data including verification criteria and a comparison criteria, and to transmit said problem data; and~~

at least one second computer for ~~selectively~~ receiving ~~said~~ problem data from ~~said~~ a first computer, said first computer permitting an originator to enter said problem data describing a problem to be solved, said problem data including a comparison criterion, said at least one second computer containing ~~at least one~~ a plurality of software ~~tool package~~ tools from different vendors for exercising said problem data, said at least one second computer selectively transmitting a result of said exercising of said problem data to at least one of said first computer and a predesignated third computer.

20. (Currently amended) The system of claim 19, further comprising a software tool to verify each said result against ~~said~~ a verification criteria included in said problem data.

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21. (Currently amended) The system of claim 19, ~~wherein, if more than one software tool package exercises said problem data to produce more than one problem solution, said verification~~ further comprising a software tool ~~additionally ranks~~ for ranking said ~~more than one problem solution~~ solutions from said plurality of software tools, based on said comparison criteria.

22. (Currently amended) A system for optimizing the solution of a complex problem solvable by software tool packages from different vendors, said system comprising:

a first interface for allowing an operator at a first computer to enter a problem description, said problem description including a ~~verification criteria and~~ a comparison ~~criteria~~ criterion;

a second interface for allowing said operator to transmit said problem description from said first computer to a second computer;

a third interface for allowing said second computer to receive said transmitted problem description and exercise said problem on each of a plurality of software tools from different vendors;

~~a first software tool using said verification criteria to verify a solution of said problem description;~~ and

a ~~second~~ ranking software tool ~~using~~ that uses said comparison ~~criteria~~ criterion to determine a ranking of ~~any~~ solutions of said problem description resulting from said software tools~~; and~~

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~~a fourth interface to transmit said ranking back to said first computer~~.

23. (Currently amended) A system for determining an optimized solution to a problem solvable

by software tools <u>from different vendors, said system</u> comprising:

a converter providing, from a problem description, a format suitable for <u>each of</u> a

<u>plurality of</u> software ~~tool package for a plurality of predetermined vendors, each said software~~

~~tool package comprising at least one software tool~~ <u>tools</u>;

an oversight module exercising said problem description on <u>each of</u> said plurality of

~~vendors'~~ software ~~tool packages~~ <u>tools from said different vendors</u>; and

a ranker module sorting and ranking results of said plurality of ~~vendors'~~ software ~~tool~~

~~packages~~ <u>tools</u>.

24. (Currently amended) A computer readable medium containing instructions executable by a

computer <u>to find an optimal solution to a problem solvable on software tools from different</u>

<u>vendors,</u> said instructions comprising <u>one or more of</u>:

a first interface for allowing an operator at a first computer to enter a problem

description, said problem description including ~~a verification criteria and~~ a <u>software tool result</u>

comparison ~~criteria~~ <u>criterion</u>;

a second interface for allowing said operator to transmit said problem description from a

first computer to a second computer;

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a third interface for allowing said second computer to receive said transmitted problem

description and exercise said problem on one of said vendor's software tool; and

~~a first software tool using said verification criteria to verify a solution of said problem~~

~~description;~~

a ~~second software tool~~ ranking module using said comparison ~~criteria~~ criterion to

determine a ranking of ~~any~~ solutions of said problem description as exercised on said different

vendors' software tools; ~~and~~

~~a fourth interface to transmit said ranking back to said first computer~~.

25. (Currently amended) A computer readable medium containing instructions executable by a

computer to perform a method of optimizing a solution for a complex problem solvable by each

of a plurality of software tool packages from different vendors, said instructions comprising:

~~selectively converting problem data into a format appropriate for at least one preselected~~

~~vendor's set of software tools;~~

an input module for inputting ~~said formatted~~ problem data into said at least one

preselected vendor's set of software tools so that said problem data can be exercised by said

vendor's software tools; and

a ranking module so that, if more than one vendor has been preselected, for at least one of

comparing results of resultant solutions and ~~a selection of~~ selecting an optimum solution based

on ~~a criteria~~ one or more ranking parameters provided in said problem data.

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26. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein said complex problem comprises an electronic chip design.